JANUARY, 1983

The I/O Connector

The Newsletter of the San Diego Atari Computer Enthusiasts

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

From the Prez...

Well, the New Year has started out with a **BANG**. ATARI has announced a new home computer, the 1200XL You will read more about it elsewhere in this newsletter. My big disappointment is that they did not provide a parallel port. I don't know which idiot at ATARI decided not to provide it, but it does restrict the capabilities of the machine. Commodore, Apple, etc., all have this feature, so why can't we? A group of us are going to the Consumer's Electronic Show in Las Vegas and we'll bring back a first-hand report on the new computer and any other news at the January meeting.

We have a new Newsletter editor, Dave Schultz. Please give him all the help you can. His job will be much easier if all of us send him reviews, programs, or just our thoughts on ATARI computing.

ANALOG Computing Magazine would like to say thank you to our user's group by offering a quantity subscription discount. This offer includes renewals. The cost is $10.00 per year. If we receive 10 or more subscriptions or renewals, our club receives a free disk subscription worth $60. Call me or see me at the January meeting if you are interested. With the disk subscription, those of us who have bought or subscribed to ANALOG would be able to save time typing in programs from the magazine.

Don Perkins, our able club Secretary, will be in charge of our booth at the SAN DIEGO COMPUTER EXPO, slated for February 18-21. He will need help manning it. Besides getting into the show free, it will be a great way of sharing your enthusiasm for the ATARI computer with others. Please contact Don or one of the other officers if you would like to help.

Remember, elections are at the January meeting. Come prepared to nominate or elect your new officers. As stated in the last newsletter, the nominating committee has chosen the following slate of candidates:

President:	Dick Hiatt
Vice-President:	Ted Langlet
Secretary:	Don Perkins
Treasurer:	Tony Tate

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

It is dues time again. Dues are due in January for 1983. We will have membership forms available at the January meeting. Please fill one out if you haven't done so already. The dues for 1983 are $10.00

One of our speakers at the January meeting will be John Veenstra of FREEDOM WON, Inc. FREEDOM WON markets personal computers to the home and small business market through independent distributors. Come to the meeting and learn how you can sell ATARI computers.

That's all for now. I am looking forward to a great new year for all of us in the club.

EDITOR'S OUTPUT

Yet another new editor. It's fine to speak of the torch being passed, but this particular situation seems best described as a hot potato being thrown. Within less than 6 months, this A.C.E. Newsletter has seen 3 new editors, each, for a variety of reasons, being sidelined into early retirement.

As the "new" new editor, I have much to give to the Newsletter and the Group. As best I can, I will coordinate and produce a balanced, quality publication, with respect to content, appeal, and design.

I am not a keyboard genius. In fact, I have been working with my Atari 800 for little over 4 months. I know a little BASIC, I'd like to know more about FORTH, I have a friend who's a whiz at Assembly Language stuff, etc., but honestly, my main interest is in **using** programs on the computer, not writing them. This does not mean I will ignore those club members who enjoy (or live for) writing programs. In an upcoming issue, you'll find a questionaire coupon. By filling it out and returning it to me, you can give me a better idea of who we are, what our interests are, and how the newsletter and ultimately the club can serve our needs and interests better.

Initially, you'll notice some changes already apparent. A new name, a new logo. A collection of features that will appear monthly, including Software and Hardware reviews, a corner for the programmers among us, a "BASIC Basics" - for those of us starting out in BASIC. Ron Miller will contribute his knowledge of the FORTH language in "Forth Avenue" — Thanks Ron. A Calendar of Events, a News of Members column, and a Want to Buy/Sell/Trade section. All of this for you. I hope you enjoy it.

My thanks go out to all of our contributors for the January issue, you did well on such short notice.

- Dave Schultz

INSIDE

- Officers' Reports
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- Computer Faire
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FREE OFFER!

You Have Until February 28, 1983 to Respond.

See Back Page,
"Buy/Sell/Trade" Section
For Details.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Well, another year has slipped by, and hopefully 1983 will be a better year than 1982 was.

As our membership grows, we will try to offer our members new services, such as computer language classes, special deals, and so forth. Our latest new item is our very own BBS, brought to your after many hours of toil, four or five gallons of coffee, two figure charges from CompuServe, and a wife who threatens to divorce me. But anyway here it is. The BBS may be accessed by calling the information number (447-8143) between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. If the BBS is down (off-line) during that time, the normal information message will be heard. So call it up and try it (you'll like it).

New items in the library are many so I will mention only a few here (to whet your appetite) . . . .

STUNTMAN: An Atari verison of Crazy Climber
BATS: Fly your bat through a cavern avoiding obstacles and poisonous bugs.
COUCH: Analyze ink blots to find out how sane (or insane) you really are.
POWER: Dominate, or try to, the world with this one.
MAGIC: A very interesting Demo.
PMEDIT: Use this utility to draw your player and/or missile.
. . . and some R-rated printer art.

Well, that's it for this month. HAPPY NEW YEAR from your librarian.

SAN DIEGO ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS
is an independent, nonprofit organization and user's group with no connection to ATARI Corporation, a Warner Communication Company. Membership fees are currently $10.00 annually from January 1983 to January 1984. Membership includes free access to the computer program library, subscription to "The I/O Connector", and classes, when held. Permission to reprint articles in any noncommercial publication is permitted, without written authorization, as long as proper credit is given.

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SUBMISSIONS
Are most welcome. Deadline is the 28th of each month.

HARDWARE PREVIEW

The Atari 1200XL

Waiting in the wings to be released in the first quarter of 1983 is the 1200XL, Atari's new top-of-the-line personal computer. With a retail price of $899, the 1200XL is a 64K machine. It's been described as "one of the 'friendliest' computers ever built... , encased in a sleek high-impact plastic and polished metal, low-profile package." It sports 2 (not 4) joystick ports, 1 (not 2) cartridge slots. There is no access to any internal components, and the new unit will not support the RAMDISK, the BIT-3 80 column board, or similar units. In these areas, Atari seems to have regressed in their design considerations. I would like to know their rationale in following this course.

Now for some good news. There is a new row of keys across the top of the standard QUERTY keys. It is to this new row that the OPTION, SELECT, and START keys have been moved. Likewise, the ATARI key (used for turning the inverse video function on and off) and the RESET key have been moved to the top. Additionally, some new keys have appeared on this top row. F1, F2, F3, and F4 are user programmable keys, in addition to having pre-programmed functions, such as disabling the keyboard during a program to eliminate accidental input or interruption, as well as a "one touch" screen disable. Finally a HELP key has been added. Ostensibly, it will be used for a programmer-defined "panic button" for the end-user. Its other use is a fascinating one: a self-generated self-diagnostic menu. Items include a 6.5 minute test of the RAM chips, a keyboard evaluation, a test of the 4-voice audio features, and an I/O connections test.

Other interesting features include a foreign language character set as a standard feature. 4 new graphic modes from BASIC are available. The memo-pad mode is gone; in its place is the ATARI logo. The cartridge slot has been shifted to the side of the new computer, with no door to open or close, and although it still makes many of us cringe, the cartridge can be inserted and removed without turning the computer off. (You're sure?)

HEAVY HARDWARE RUMOR—

In the works is a new disk drive, designed as a companion to the 1200XL. It will have a slim-line design, and offer a single density format, but with more tracks, giving the user about 150K per disk (and ensuring compatability with existing software). No price hinted yet, but availability is possible sometime in April. It is said that the 810 Disk Drive will be discontinued.

Also on the way are a new Program Recorder for under $100, a new 80-column Printer (at 40 CPS, wake up, Mildred), retailing at $549.00, and a four-color 40-column Color Printer/Plotter.

A FINAL WORD TO THE WISE . . .

With the release of the 1200XL, the Atari 800 is about to become a greater value than ever. It has been disclosed that the 800 will retail for $699 as opposed to its present $899. Some dealers will be giving fantastic discounts. For those of you who've been waiting, your patience may have paid off.

-ed. et al

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEGINNER'S GROUP

The Beginner's Group is for those of you who are new to personal computers. It is lead by some of our old-timers who have **A LOT** of experience with Atari computers. At the meetings, we talk about how to use your computer, teach Atari BASIC, help solve and discuss problems and generally have a good time. Like the North County group, we ask that you bring your computer, tape/disk, TV/monitor, and power cords. With all your equipment there, we can help you best. Besides, the computers themselves are what it's all about, anyway, right? We will start meeting again on Saturday, January 22 at 4:00 p.m. at Priscilla Stevens College in Mission Valley. There is a small per-person charge since we are renting the facilities. If you are interested, (or can find a place where there is NO charge on a Saturday), give me a call at 479-6253 and ask for D.J.

By the way, I would like to thank John Dieker of Computer Store International for helping us get the facilities we are presently using.

— Don Perkins

ETC.

STORCH

Storch was a cynic, or was often labeled as one. "I don't like the way our club is evolving," he confided in me last week. "When I sit behind the long desk at the front of the meeting room, I look out and see a hungry horde. A few bright faces, a couple of glimmers. . . , I think I know why they're there." Storch is one of the originals. He studied Computer Science in college, earned two masters, works for NCR, bought an Atari (one of the first at $1082) after weighing software availability, service, internal configuration, and cost. "There were just 11 of us at the first A.C.E. meeting," he said. "Once, we spent 3 hours just discussing a small section in one particular program a club member had written. We were all hotshots, explorers in a new frontier. The GTIA chip, the B ROM . . . , they're there because of guys like us. We told Atari where the bugs were, where the improvements need to be made. Look at us now. An Endangered Species." Storch closed his heavily-lidded eyes, his eyeballs rolling under them. They slowly opened. "Computer literacy, hah!" he suddenly shouted. "So they join the club, come to a meeting, clean out everything possible from the library. They visit this computer store and that, grill the owners, salesmen. Then they buy mail order and save $5 or $10. Maybe they scout around in search of the local software pirate and try to save some more." Storch's eyes rolled slowly to the floor. "It's only human nature to want as much as possible for a little as possible." He looked me straight in the eyes. "But the same rationale that works 'so well' out in the consuming world, that 'business-as-usual' attitude, will surely make a shambles of this club." Storch rambled. He left to fetch a cup of coffee from the kitchen.

"Ethics. Guidelines. Rules. Pride . . . . I propose this. A surtax on all software, hardware, all computer related products. The monies to flow directly into Federal coffers. A new branch of the FCC will be formed: the FCRC (Federal Computer Regulatory Commission). Anyone desiring to buy and operate a computer must first pass an operator's test. The general format would be patterned after the steps necessary to obtain, say, a Ham Radio license. As the Ham must know Morse code, emergency protocols, etc., the computer operator must have a working knowledge, albeit rudimentary, of BASIC, Assembly Language, various PEEKs and POKEs, error codes, some math and logic background, an ability to type . . . . Of course the degree to which a person would be quizzed would depend on the amount of equipment and software they wished to operate."

Storch's coffee cup was empty. "If this truly came to pass, how many personal computers do you think there would be in this country?" he asked. I pondered. He held up his hands with all fingers extended like spokes. "More than that, I think," I added. "Of course," he replied, "but you know, if it came to pass, maybe the club would be like the good old days."

Later in the week, Storch's words touched me again. Yes, he was a resident cynic, but he had a good point. If only the computer-using public would probe below the glossy surface of the game cartridge, get involved in a user's group (really involved), speak out at meetings, ask questions, contribute to the club newsletter, read, wonder, grow, learn.

Storch said, "rise above, use it to its fullest potential, and you'll learn more about your fullest potential."

The views expressed in the column do not represent those of the San Diego Atari Computer Enthusiasts Newsletter, only those of Storch himself.

SOFTWARE REVIEW

FILEMANAGER 800+

Reviewed by Dick Hiatt

Besides getting the bugs out of FILEMANAGER and doing away with the key, the people at Synapse have made some marked improvements in FILEMANAGER.

FILEMANAGER 800+ allows the user to create an initial set of fields easily, to review this form at any time, and make modifications to it. FILEMANAGER 800+ allows three types of fields: 1) alphabetic, 2) numeric, and 3) dollar and cents fields. The latter are stored as special numbers with two decimal places, and, when printed are right justified. Calculated fields are allowed also.

FILEMANAGER 800+ provides three sort fields, which is handy if you are sorting Smiths or Jones.

The entire program is menu based which makes it very easy to use. The manual is very complete and easy to use, though it would be nice if all the error messages were listed in one place instead of being scattered around the manual. It would also be nice if the program supported pagination to avoid printing on the tear line of fanfold paper. Page numbers would be handy, too.

FILEMANAGER 800+ is relatively slow to load as it is written in BASIC. They tell me that a machine language version is comming.

I use this program frequently (the club membership list is on FILEMANAGER 800) and find it very handy. One of the nice things about FILEMANAGER 800+ is that the format can be modified if you wish to add or delete fields with out destroying the data.

"Dick, how's the soup doing?"

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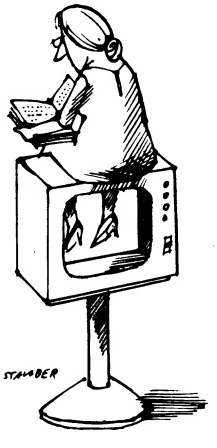

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Q & A

Q: "Reading through my Atari manual recently, I came across a reference to a 'Default Value'. I have no idea what this means. What does 'Default' mean?"

A: The term "Default" is used to describe a condition or numeric value that exists or is caused to exist by the computer until it is told to do something else. In other words, a value or condition programmed into the operating system, which can be changed, if necessary.

Here are some common default conditions and values:

When you power up your computer, you will always be in Graphics Mode 0. This is the **default** graphics mode for the Atari.

You will find your margin settings have standard default settings, too. These are: left margin at 2, right margin at 38. These can easily be changed by poking different values into POKE 82 (for left margin) and POKE 83 (for right margin).

Tab settings at power-up have default values of 7, 15, 23, 31, and 39. The first push of the tab key brings the cursor to column 7, the second push moves it to column 15, etc.

Another common default value often encountered is the default disk drive value. If 16K of memory is installed, the Atari computer can use from one to four disk drives. If you wished to load YOUR.FIL from drive #4, you would type LOAD"D4:YOUR.FIL". But if you wanted to load YOUR.FIL from drive #1, you could leave out the number after the specified device (D for Disk drive) and simply say LOAD"D:YOUR.FIL" instead of LOAD"D1:YOUR.FIL". The computer understands the default value for the disk drive is #1.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

NOVEMBER MEETING — 82.11.15

Dick opened the meeting at 6:47 with the announcement that our guest speaker had cancelled out on us to go to Applefest.

Jim Keese from On-Line Computers told us about his super-deal for club members. We'd all like to thank you, Jim, for your wonderful support so far. As yet, they still do not have authorization for Atari repair.

The Treasurer's report was given and it was decided that the report itself should be deleted from the newsletter versions of the minutes in the future.

We did have a guest speaker of sorts, though. Warren McKenna, from the San Diego Computer Society. The Society offers a BBS, an amalgamate library, group discounts, vendor discounts, a swap meet, monthly tutorials, several SIGs (Special Interest Groups), and language discussions from local experts. The Officers decided at the following board meeting that joining SDCS would be a good idea and the idea would be brought before the club for a vote at the January meeting.

The club has opted to purchase the Softside DV subscription for 1983. The club is paying $75 and Chuck Fowler, Club Librarian, is paying the remaining $50, since the Program of the Month is copyrighted material and cannot be placed in the library. Those wishing to have copies of the Softside programs MUST have a copy of the issue in which the program appeared, due to Softside's limited copyright over published software. These rules MUST and **WILL** be adhered to. Softside has sued several other computer organizations for infringement of copyright and won. The above stipulations were approved by Softside.

By the way if you missed the demo session of the meeting, you missed a version of All-Star Baseball that used the Alien Group Speech Synthesizer; a demonstration of scribbling the fast way: in FORTH; and a fantastic timing program. All produced by our members! Such talent! We'd all love to see more of these "in-house" programs. Remember, John Harris of Jawbreakers and Mouse Attack fame was our first president.

QUICK BITS

- Want computer insurance? Ask Dick for information. ($35 per year).
- Dave Story says the C compiler for the Atari is great.
- Percom disk drives: $488 for single density, $960 for dual density.
- Its official: Atari game cartridges for Galaxian, Defender, and Qix (the editor's favorite) are just around the corner.

COMPUTER FAIRE

Again this year, we have been provided with a booth at the San Diego Computer Faire, February 18-21 at the San Diego Civic Center. As coordinator for our appearance at the show, I need volunteers to man (or woman) the booth. There will hopefully be an officer there at all times, but I need to have at least three people at the booth at any one time. You don't need to know an awful lot about Atari Computers, just why you like them and how the club has helped you. (Having fun is considered as helping you!) The Faire is a lot of fun and booth workers are admitted free. If you are interested and would like more information, **PLEASE** call me!

— Don Perkins

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The San Diego Atari Computer Enthusiasts do not in any way endorse or accept the "pirating" of copyrighted software and will not tolerate such actions at any meeting. We have not had a problem with this in the past and as we grow, we would like to maintain our good reputation. We thank all of our new members for helping us so far in this endeavor.

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Paul Caesar's
BEST BUYS

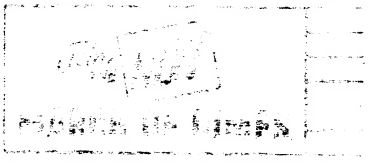
This month I have an update and a couple of new locations. First, if you're looking for a printer, check out Computer World at 5375 Kearny Villa Road, phone 268-1951. They currently have the Smith-Corona TP1 at $529, with others comparably priced. A store which will open January 15th is MailComp at 9434 Chesapeake Dr., Suite 1202, phone 578-1033. They will have a good selection of Atari games. Other software can be gotten quickly. An addition to our list of sources is The Computer Store, 209 3rd Ave., Chula Vista, CA 92010. This store is affiliated with Disney's in Mission Gorge and both stores will give a 5% to 30% discount with your ACE card.

In the unusual instance that you need repair for some Atari product, the following are Atari repair centers;

STORE	LOCATION	800 Serv.	400 Serv.	810 Serv.
A.S.C.	7309C University	$55+parts	$55+parts	$65+parts
ANV	8464 Commerce Ave.	90+parts	50+parts	90+parts
On-Line	I-8 & Jackson	60+parts	40+parts	65+parts
Sierra	5037 Ruffner	"Most repairs done for $50 labor + parts."		

Note: On-Line stated that their prices were subject to change.

These prices are the most complete information I could get. Each time I got information, the charge varied, so I recommend calling ahead to verify. The people who were most helpful were at On-Line, and I would not hesitate to let them repair any of my own equipment. My strongest hope is that you will never need to use this information. I wish you a happy new year.



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A Disc Subsystem
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Software Demos - **YOURS!**
Please bring your Xmas or Chanukah Gift Software to demo to the Group. We will supply the Hardware.

See You.

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